

A MENTOR'S QUICK GUIDE TO



**MENTORING AROUND
CROSS-CULTURAL
EXPERIENCES**

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INTRODUCTION

The Center for Global Programs & Studies (GPS) provides support, educational opportunities, and resources for both domestic and international students at Wake Forest University. As our students engage in cross-cultural experiences both within and outside of the University, we know that the presence of formal and informal mentors in students' lives provides *rich relationships and conversations for unpacking and reflecting on lessons learned and personal growth and development*. Additionally, for many international students in particular, a mentor can *help foster a sense of belongingness* for those students adjusting to a new culture and a new campus. This quick guide is intended to provide you with a brief overview for how to engage in mentoring relationships and conversations with Wake Forest students around their cross-cultural experiences.



WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is having *intentional conversations* with another person that are focused on his/her personal growth and development. A mentoring relationship can last several weeks, months, or even years depending on the needs and goals of that particular relationship. No matter the duration or goals, mentoring is not to be taken lightly. Mentoring requires:

- Asking thoughtful and thought-provoking questions to guide decision-making and problem-solving
- Practicing active listening in regular, meaningful conversations
- Role-modeling behavior through words and actions
- Providing objective feedback and guidance
- Facilitating the mentee's ability to practice self-reflection and self-development
- Displaying a sincere passion to support the growth of another person
- Expending time, energy, and enthusiasm





LEARNING FROM CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Whether it is students studying abroad outside of the United States, international students coming to Wake Forest, or intentional engagement on the Wake Forest campus, any experience that encourages students to step out of their comfort zones and interact with other cultures has the potential for deep, meaningful growth and learning. Indeed, the administrators of the annual National Survey of Student Engagement have identified these sorts of experiences as one of six aspirational “high-impact” practices for colleges and universities. All high-impact practices share the following: They demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, encourage collaboration with diverse others, and provide frequent and substantive feedback.

We also know, however, that just “going there” does not necessarily lead to the development of intercultural skill-building and learning. The addition of a skilled mentor, whether it is a faculty member, a staff member, an alumnus, a peer, or a friendship family, creates opportunities for intentional conversations before, during, and after the experience which give the student the appropriate tools to unpack his or her experience. Effective mentors help students reflect upon their experiences, the challenges they are facing, and the new skills and knowledge that they are gaining as a result of that experience. Effective mentors give students a safe space to take risks and step outside of their comfort zones. Effective mentors help students to put these cross-cultural experiences in context of their overall educational experience at Wake Forest.

The following are just a few of the many ways that students can learn from cross-cultural experiences, with the help of a mentor:

- **Deeper understanding of self, identify, and values**
- **Greater empathy and perspective for others’ values and cultural norms**
- **Interpersonal communication skills**
- **Managing conflict**
- **Greater proficiency in another language**
- **Problem solving and decision-making skills**
- **Navigating uncertainty**
- **Understanding and valuing cultural differences**





TIPS ON BEING A MENTOR

1. Develop the relationship.

Whether you are a friendship family helping an international student navigate his transition into Wake Forest or a faculty member guiding a student through a study abroad experience in a more formal mentoring relationship, it is important to take the time to develop the rapport and trust that is so critical to any effective relationship. Share some personal stories reflecting on a time that you were faced with an unfamiliar situation; by disclosing challenges and uncertainties that you faced you will make it more comfortable for your student to share some of his own. Share expectations and ask the student what he expects from you. Set the tone for an effective relationship by role modeling appropriate behavior, being open and willing to answer questions, and encouraging friendly conversation.

2. Create a plan. Talk about what you will do together over the course of the relationship. How often will you meet? How long will this relationship last? How will you contact each other? Will your conversations be confidential? These are all important expectations to discuss at the start of your relationship. Encourage the student to set some goals for the upcoming semester or year so that he will gain the most out of the experience and your relationship.

3. Facilitate intentional conversations. Effective mentoring conversations are built around four key questions: Where are you now? Where do you want to be? How do you plan to get there? And, What happened? (What did you learn? How will you use that in the future?). During the course of your mentoring relationship, look for opportunities to engage your student in conversation around these key questions, provide objective feedback and guidance, and practice active listening.

4. Create and Look for Growth and Reflection Opportunities. In addition to engaging your student in conversation about his experience and pushing him to reflect on what he is learning, you can also create opportunities for further learning. For example, you can take him to events, suggest books or articles to read together, and provide introductions to other individuals who might help him to achieve his goals.

5. Celebrate and Come to Closure. Mentoring relationships are not necessarily intended to last forever. Take time to celebrate your successes and bring the relationship to appropriate closure when the time is right. This is another opportunity for growth and reflection and for you and your student to discuss how you each will use what you have learned from the mentoring relationship in the future.





ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Mentoring asks that mentors be skilled in active listening, providing objective feedback, and helping students learn how to be reflective. One of the best ways to do this is to develop a tool kit of key questions that you can ask as students embark on and complete growth experiences, such as studying abroad, transitioning to Wake Forest as an international student, volunteering, serving in a leadership role, and/or engaging in new academic experiences.

QUESTIONS TO HELP PLAN FOR EXPERIENCES:

- What is your goal?
- What do you hope to achieve from this experience?
 - What steps can you take to achieve that goal?
- What skills or knowledge do you hope to gain from this experience?
- What do you think will be most challenging or rewarding for you?
 - What are you the most worried about/afraid of?

QUESTIONS TO HELP UNPACK EXPERIENCES:

- How well did you accomplish your goal?
 - What did you learn?
- How can you use that new knowledge, skill, or ability in the future?
 - What was most challenging or rewarding for you?
 - How are you different now than you were at the beginning?
 - What do you still need/want to learn?
- How can you describe this experience and the insights gained to a potential employer or graduate school?



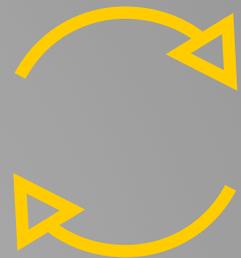


PROVIDING FEEDBACK

The best feedback is immediate. Don't wait six months to tell someone that they have done a great job or to address any issues that may arise within the relationship. This kind of delayed feedback is hollow and demoralizing. Instead, look for opportunities in everyday encounters to provide your student with effective, objective feedback. After all, this is part of the reason that he or she is in a mentoring relationship with you: to learn from the wisdom of your experience!

Below are some reflection questions to help prompt your thinking:

- Something that my mentee does really well is...
- An example (think behavior and actions) of when he or she did this is...
- What this demonstrates about him or her is...
- Something that my mentee could improve upon is...
- An example (think behavior and actions) of when he or she did this is...
- How this impacts me/others is...



CONCLUSION

Ultimately, serving in the role of mentor for Wake Forest students going through cross-cultural experiences is a great opportunity to provide a supportive relationship, ask important and timely questions to prompt reflection, and to guide students during pivotal times of growth and learning. However, it's important to remember that **effective mentoring creates learning opportunities for both partners**. Mentors have the opportunity to learn how to build and support effective relationships, provide objective feedback and guidance based on personal experience, facilitate reflective thinking, and take ownership for their own personal growth and learning.





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